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426 and repayment of principal and interest. Members are involved in these transactions out of different motives. The organizer is usually the one most interested in borrowing money. Other participants may wish to earn interest on spare cash. They are the bankers of the group. Between the person who needs immediate cash and the bankers are those who would like to borrow money during the life of the group but are indifferent as to the precise time, hoping to bid and obtain a loan at a favorable rate to buy a pig or to repair a house.

The most complex of these loan groups were found in Minatogawa. A group may have any number of members; usually there are from 10 to 15, but there may be only five to nine. Each group has a set of regulations (no-ai no kisoku). In Minatogawa money is borrowed for house or boat building, for buying pigs, or for other business purposes.

[57A] The first meeting begins with a party given by the persons most interested in starting the group. On the following months, more modest parties given at the homes of other members are in conjunction with the bidding and distribution of the money. The entertainments of the first and last meetings include pork or goat meat, bean curd, tea, and sake. At the first meeting the organizer is the host. Rules are established as to whether the indebtedness shall be put into writing and as to guarantors. (Before the war, occasionally a borrower ran off to Japan or to one of the other islands and was never heard of again). Now a guarantor is required, but this is a formality. The system really rests on mutual trust and on the co-operation of friends and relatives of known honesty. One person may belong to several groups. Multiple membership is naturally confined to those with plenty of ready cash who have no immediate use for it. A group whose membership is poor will subscribe from ¥100 to ¥300 a month, a moderately well-to-do one from ¥2000-3000. There are now about 30 in Minatogawa. Members usually are present or former residents of the village. Men and women participate. These gatherings combine business with a friendly social atmosphere so typical of Okinawan business transactions and official contacts. The mats of the room are arranged to form an empty square in the center of the room, and this square becomes a combination counting board and refreshment table.

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In one type, the loan is awarded after secret bidding (usually by writing on a piece of paper), the award going to the lowest bidder, for he is offering the highest discount. For example, ¥20,000 are available for a loan to be repaid in ten installments of ¥2100 each (¥2000 principal and ¥100 interest). If a member wants the money badly enough, he may bid ¥17,500, accepting that amount and paying back on the basis of ¥20,000 plus interest. He thus would get the award over a man who bid at a discount of ¥2000 or ¥18,000.

In one form of the discount type, the organizer automatically gets the first loan. He does not bid and does not lose by discounting. He has started the group for this purpose. On the second and succeeding months, the bidding is secret and competitive. Assuming ten members pooling ¥2000 each the first month, in the second nine members advance

absence of need of a similar release from the boring and monotonous life of the women. Yet I noticed little in the behavior of village women to indicate they were overwhelmed by monotony or bored with life, though perhaps longer residence in the villages would have proved this observation false. Might one say that the culture does not fulfill its promise to the men, even though they are favored and catered to and that the drinking is the result of this disappointment? This neglects the fact that drinking is old in the culture and is almost always done in the company of others. If personal frustration and disappointment were the cause, one might expect more compulsive and solitary drinking and more alcoholism.

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The sources of this distinction between the drinking men and the abstemious women, I think, lie in the values held by the culture. In the first place, sake drinking is age old in Japan, and probably in Okinawa as well. Drinking sake is associated with ceremonies, such as marriage, with religious observances, with social and public life. The public life of an official, a shopkeeper or business man, a farmer, a fisherman is not divorced from entertainment. Men have an outside life. In their dealings with other men, they are accustomed to drinking. Women do not have this outside life. They have inside duties of which the care of the children and of the house are the most important. Historically, the source of the abstemiousness of the women may be the obligations of being a mother, to be ready at all times to care and provide for or nurse her children, obligations considered incompatible with drinking. Women are expected to be polite, refined, and quiet. These ideals may be difficult to maintain in drinking.

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At times a husband and wife may participate in social gatherings as a couple. These gatherings may either be (1) an informal, often casual, event when guests drop in and spend part of the evening, and (2) the formal affairs, such as a marriage, a birthday celebration, a holiday, an extended family reunion, or the observance of a death anniversary. On these occasions, the men occupy the first room, the women the second. The entertainment and conversations of the evening are for the most part governed by this segregation.

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Though women are tolerant of drinking, domestic difficulties are often caused by the drinking of the men. Frequent drinking with its noise and late hours may result in family quarrels (fufukanka). Quarrels involving the wife and the husband's female relatives, especially the mother, are said to be uncommon. In the southern villages, the war did away with one cause of family quarrels. Men no longer go to the goisha quarter. There are naturally tensions coming out of individual antagonisms and dissatisfactions: the husband's mother who ignores her grandchild because she dislikes her daughter-in-law, pressure on a woman to produce children to satisfy the pride of the husband and of the grandparents, and failure to bear children, which usually leads to divorce initiated by the husband. Divorces, in these rural villages, were found to be uncommon.

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5 No reliable statistics could be found. These remarks and those in the next paragraph are based on personal observation, impressions and conversations.

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The New Year

Two basic themes are expressed in public celebrations and holidays. The first of these is remembrance and respect for the dead. The holidays are in part public observances of basic obligations under the family system. In the second place, holidays are occasions of thanksgiving. In a year there are not many official holidays or rest days. The work year is not interrupted, as is our custom, with week ends which may provide from one to two days of leisure. Sunday is not a day of rest. Officials and school teachers do not work at their official duties on the week ends.

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The traditional public holidays are based on the lunar calendar. In the discussion which follows, some holidays have been included, even though they involve only some of the people.

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The western New Year is observed perfunctorily. It is observed only by present and former officials and honored elders of a township. The custom, about 40 years old in Gushichan-son, is known as New Year Banquet Party (Shinnenenkai). Headmen from each of the villages, members and former members of the village councils, and respected elders, the mayor and his subordinate officials and members of the township assembly are the chief participants. It is a social event, held in a public building or at a school, a "meeting for conversation" (hanashiai) at which food and sake are served. The event begins early in the afternoon and is generally over by early evening.

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Lunar New Year (shōgatsu), the first day of the first lunar month and O-Bon in the seventh lunar month, are the two most important holidays. Lunar New Year falls in late January or early February. (In 1951 it was on February 6; in 1952, on January 27). This is a time of new beginnings, of thanksgiving, family reunions, and observances in honor of the dead. It is a three day holiday, with much prior preparation, and on the third day, there is either a symbolic or a partial return to work.

The new year is preceded by a series of activities on the last day of the 12th month (twisoka). Before the war, these preparations were more elaborate than they are now. In Hinatogawa, bamboo and pine poles with a rice straw rope (shimenawa) hanging across the top were placed at the compound entrance. The purpose was to scare off evil spirits and devils. A piece of charcoal wrapped in sea weed and an orange hung from the rice rope. This custom now is also rare in Matsuda. Only one rice straw rope used for this purpose was observed, and this had been put up some time before the new year.

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Other customs of preparing for the new beginning are still observed in all the villages: the house is cleaned; a bath is taken; old debts are paid; the New Year pig is slaughtered, or in the interests of economy three or four families may share a pig. The day before the New Year is the occasion for recalling one's bad deeds and of resolving on

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577 better behavior. In one instance from Matsuda, the members of the family talk over their good and bad acts and resolve henceforth to do good.

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[823] In all the villages, the custom of new or young water (wakanisu) has survived. In Minatogawa, at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning of the New Year, young children take fresh water in a tea pot to the homes of relatives. The new water is poured into a cup, placed on the Buddhist god shelf, or on the shelf of the fire god in the kitchen. The children are given Y5 or Y10 by the relatives, who are then supposed to stay young themselves. In Matsuda, new water is taken from a well early in the morning, and some is put on the god shelf. The first tea of the New Year is made with "young water".

A parent may also give a piece of pork with salt on it to his child announcing that he is now one year older. This custom is still observed, even though ages officially are now reckoned in the western manner.

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[782] In all the villages, the morning observances are family affairs; the public nature of the holiday is evident later. Tea and sake are placed in front of the ancestral tablets on the god shelf. A fresh kimono is put on and the offering is made before breakfast. Then the father takes the sake from the god shelf, offering sips first to his wife and then to the children.

[778] Later there are visits to the place of the patron deity or first ancestor of the village (ujigami). In Hanashiro, all of the people make this visit. In Minatogawa, it is also a village affair, but is more involved because there are more places to go: a local religious site of unknown origin, the palace of the gods of the sea (ryūgū), the supposed place of the mountain god, the three wells with their god places, and finally to the places of the two patron deities. In Matsuda, the village head man, accompanied by surviving minor priestesses (formerly in the noro order) make visits to the place of the patron deity. But whether all the villagers or only their representatives take part, the visits have the same meaning: to offer thanks to the founders of the village.

[793] The New Year is a time for extended family reunions. If the home site of the extended family is not in the village, the family or a representative may go to the reunion in another village, if it is not too far away. Only members of the extended family attend these celebrations.

[594] With early morning observances in the home, the public ceremonies, and the extended family reunions over, the gay, informal and public part of the holiday begins. Hospitality is offered on all sides, and there is much drinking among the men. The celebration continues for the rest of the first day and through the second. The third day is a transitional day whose theme is the need of returning to work. This is hachibaru (to begin farming). The day is given over to more feasting and drinking and to some actual or token work.

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Minatogawa	9
Iatsuda	16

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The Democratic Government of the Township and Village

The description of local government has intentionally been delayed to this point because its operation and functions can be seen to greater advantage after an acquaintance with family life and the various forms of group activity. We can see it, not so much a formal structure to be described in legalistic terms, but as an expression of many of the characteristics of the culture we have already found in the family system, group activity, and individual leadership.

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Okinawa and the various smaller islands of the Central Ryukyus (Okinawa-gunto) is one of the four main political subdivisions of the chain. The gunto is divided into townships, and within each township, there are several settlements (buraku, ku, asa) which we have consistently called villages. Township government is the channel for the enforcement of laws and regulations from higher governmental agencies and the source of local measures which govern the several villages of the township.

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The seat of the township government is one of the villages of the township.⁴ In Gushichan township, the village office (yakuba) is at Gushichan village, while in Ginosu township, the office is in Ginosu village.

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At the head of this government is a mayor (sonchō) elected for a four year term. There is no strenuous campaigning for the office. Friends may induce a well known man to run, then visit the villages, and ask the people to vote for him. A reputation for being kind, fair, and refined (otonashii) goes far in electing a man. Once in office he is extremely busy, and like the village headman, usually looks forward to the end of his term rather than to re-election. A new mayor appoints his own or reappoints the old staff. He chooses a vice-mayor (jōyaku) with the approval of the village assembly (gikai).

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A township office generally has the following administrative sections: (1) a treasury and disbursing office (shūryōkyaku), (2) a general affairs (shomū) sections. The head of this section is in charge of the family registers (koseki) and of the registry of seals. These two important functions require a little elaboration.

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⁴ The government actually described here is that of Gushichan township. It did not seem worthwhile to repeat essentially the same information for Ginosu and then to make minute comparisons and contrasts between them.

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and look after the sick. Even if they are too old for any work, like two oldsters over 80 years, they can still hold the youngest grandchild. Two exceptional old men, brothers of almost the same age, pass their time by making rope bags and mats from the fiber of the fan palm. Both are active as financial experts, investing money here and there and lending it for high interests in various shrewd transactions.

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INFORMAL AND FORMAL COOPERATION

Cooperation plays a prominent part in Taira economy. Assistance is always given for major tasks, such as preparing grass land for farm use or house building, or for work which must be done quickly, such as transplanting rice or harvesting and milling sugar. In fact, since wet rice cultivation depends on assistance in any culture that works its paddies by hand, it is noteworthy that the term *iimarū*, used in Taira for labor exchange in planting and harvesting, is also extended to other mutual assistance. The term, literally translated, means "gathering by rotation." A family who plans a project that needs the help of others makes an informal arrangement with relatives or neighbors to help for one or more days. This is simply done by notifying individuals that such help is needed. No one, unless he has urgent reasons, would refuse to comply with a call for assistance. If it is a small task, a few close relatives are asked. In most larger undertakings, it is the neighborhood group that lends a hand. These mutual-assistance groups usually form within the central village and within each of the geographical clusters of the outlying village, although close relatives from other parts of the community may be called. However, the most recent arrivals in Taira, all present members of one family line who have the same surname, act jointly in reclamation of neglected fields to strengthen their economic position.

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Return services are expected, but nobody would admit that there is any thought of equal compensation and would not even joke about the matter. There is a strong feeling that calculated thinking is unseemly not only among relatives but also among unrelated neighbors. One man, when asked what would happen if a person refused to comply to a request for help, answered, "There is no such dirty person, and if there were one, he would be an outcast." During the rice planting season, persons helping in another's fields will shortly be helped themselves. In housebuilding, a long time may pass until those who aided will need aid in return.

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Except for people over 56, pregnant women, and mothers of chil-

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626 diate relatives but also toward members of the entire community, and
156 even certain strangers, appears in many contexts. Any villager feels
[479] a sense of obligation to participate in mutual assistance, and someone
who fails to live up to this obligation is severely criticized. A person
who commits a crime is said to have no feeling of obligation, and it
seems clear that the infrequency of transgression, either the violation
of mutual help codes or more serious infractions, is held in check by
fear of censure.

626 The Japanese moral code, which stresses obligations and feelings of
● 577 indebtedness and gratitude toward those from whom favors have been
867 received, is obviously related to such social control forces or is in fact
[177] identical with them. Japanese ethical training was part of school train-
ing before World War II, and it is still deeply valued and followed.
[571] That any close-knit community tends to foster such forces of control is
common knowledge. Yet the positive attitude toward obligations and
their elaboration in interpersonal relationships is noteworthy and char-
acterizes an important aspect of Taira life. It is learned early, as we
found out when one mother said about her 4-year-old daughter: "She
understands the idea (of obligations and indebtedness), although she
does not know the concepts." When the family receives a gift, the
little girl asks, "Shall we take some fish (a counter present) to them?"
In spite of the positive value mentioned, there seem to be few com-
pulsions connected with obligations. Actions appear spontaneous rather
than forced. Of course, these obligations are of importance in deter-
mining contributions of individual households at weddings, funerals,
and other occasions where interpersonal ties are cemented.

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Chapter 6

Social Organization

571 In every society an individual belongs to a number of groups, over-
lapping in membership and differentiated by function. A resident of
Taira is no exception. Some groups are open, that is to say, new mem-